



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INDEX OF TRANSCRIPT

NARRATOR: RAMSP RAMSBOTHAM, PETER
TAPE NO.: 01

BAHRAIN

CABINET OF MOSSADEGH, MOHAMMAD

CHAH BAHAR PROJECT

GHAKIB, KORMOZ

GREAT BRITAIN, COMMERCIAL INTERESTS IN IRAN

GREAT BRITAIN, DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH

HASIBI, KAZEM

IRAQ

MIDDLETON, SIR GEORGE

PAHLAVI FOUNDATION

PARSONS, ANTHONY

PERSIAN GULF

REPORTER, SHAPOUR (ARDESHIRI)

REVOLUTION, CAUSES OF

SHAH & ARMS PURCHASES

SHAH, BACKGROUND OF THE

SHAH, CHARACTER OF THE

SHAH, CORRUPTION UNDER THE

SHAH, FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE

SHAH, FOREIGN TRAVELS OF THE

SHAH, POLICIES TOWARD POLITICAL PARTIES

SHAH, RULE & ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE OF THE

SHEPHERD, SIR FRANCIS

TUNG ISLANDS

03-10-87

INDEX OF TRANSCRIPT

NARRATOR: RAMSP RAMSBOTHAM, PETER
TAPE NO.: 01

TWENTY-FIFTH CENTURY CELEBRATIONS

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, THE

WRIGHT, SIR DENIS

ZAHEDI, ARDESHIR, AS AMBASSADOR & FOREIGN MINISTER

----- 01 -----

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Narrator: Peter Ramsbotham

Date: October 18, 1985

Place: London, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape no: 1

Q. Sir Peter, how did you first become familiar with Iran? And what did you know, or what sort of impressions did you have about the country before you first went there?

A. Before I came. Well, I was British High Commissioner in Cyprus from '69 to early '71, at the time of Makarios, and I suppose that was really my first experience of that part of the world -- of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Then I was appointed -- I think largely by Ted Heath -- to Iran. And I rather think at that time -- it's quite interesting -- that (it's not directly answering this question, but I'm coming to it) ... the Shah at that time was very suspicious of what he called the "Arab-lovers" in the Foreign Office. And by "Arab-lovers" he meant all those officials (of which at that time Tony Parsons, curiously enough, was one,

although there was an interval later) who had been brought up at NIKAS <?>, and all spoke Arabic, and had spent a lot of their life at Bahrain, or down the Gulf in various areas, and he, at that time, had a strong -- it's a very strong -- personal antipathy to the Arab world at the time.... And to Nasser, and all that that represented. And I think he didn't want as British ambassador in Iran those who he felt had a bias the other way.

So this is really more an explanation of why I was appointed at that time, rather than this particular question.

Q. No, no, this is fine.

A. And he ... there was another -- I won't mention names -- but there was somebody senior to me, quite senior to me, who the Foreign Office, I think, had wanted to send as ambassador after Denis Wright, who I think the Shah felt was too imbued with and identified with Arab experiences in the Arab countries. And he, I think, indicated that that wouldn't be so suitable. It so happened -- luckily for me, for you know, I loved Iran -- luckily for me, I wasn't tarnished with that brush at all. I had had no experience in Arab countries -- Cyprus was my nearest, so to speak -- and I think Ted Heath, who came and visited me at that time in Cyprus, suggested it, and I was offered that job.

But beyond that I had no ... I mean, other than knowledge of ... I mean, I was interested, I always had been interested, in Persian literature, particularly in the Sufi literature, which I'd found in Oxford in earlier days. I didn't study it, but it was part of my general education, and I was familiar with Jalalaldin Rumi, and the Birds, and Attar, and those -- in English translation -- Nicholson, mostly Nicholson's translation. I'd had all that love and experience. But purely as general culture.

But my immediate reaction therefore was very favorable, of course, because I felt I would be able to renew this interest there. And I'd never been there, and I'd had no knowledge.... Correction: of course I'd been there, because I went for two ... a month or so in 1951 to do the negotiations with Mossadegh, with the Stokes Mission at that time. And, in point of fact, I've done one or two television things on this recently -- it was a program called End of Empire, which one appeared on: Donald Logan, and myself, and George Middleton, and others.

Q. Yes. I've seen it.

A. You've seen that. And I appeared ... they cut out most of the interesting things I had to say, as they always do, but I did make one or two appearances on that, because at that time Stokes, the minister, he didn't speak....

Mossadegh would have nothing to do with the embassy, with Shepherd or Middleton, they were cut off. We were in the Saheb-Gharaniyeh Palace at that time, and quite separate. And the negotiations were entirely conducted with the Stokes Mission and Mossadegh. And Engineer Hasib, of....

Q. Hasibi.

A. Hasibi -- of ill-memory, as far as I'm concerned....

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Because he spoilt them, the negotiations. Anyhow, at that time ... Stokes didn't speak French, and Mossadegh had a sort of Sorbonne French, of 1880, which just survived, and really we did most of the talking together. So I had that experience, and I'm quite wrong when I say I didn't....

But it wasn't Persia. That was a very encapsulated, intense, three weeks -- whatever it was -- at the time of Kashani and all those ... a difficult period. And one couldn't say one had any ... impressions of Iran. In fact, the impressions one had weren't very favorable because the conditions were so extraordinary.

So the answer to that general question is I had -- always had -- a great respect and liking for French <Persian>

literature, particularly the early literature, and had this one experience in August, 1951, of the Mossadegh negotiations. That really, I think, covers that first question.

Q. Well, I'd be interested to know: before you actually set foot in Tehran, what sort of -- just generally -- what sort of briefing was a man like yourself given? What sort of impressions did you have? And then I'd like to ask you to compare the impressions before arrival in Iran compared with the impressions you actually <unclear>

A. It's difficult to go back, because my experience in Iran was so intense -- I travelled a lot in that time -- that very short time. It's difficult to remember how one was before.

Q. Well, did you actually come back to the Foreign Office?
<unclear>

A. I did ... I saw Denis Wright, of course, who was an old friend of mine. We'd served together in the economic department when I first joined the Foreign Office in 1948, rather late after the war. He was there then. And we were friends, and knew each other, so I saw a lot of him. And I did a lot of reading, as far as one could, but it doesn't help you very much, you know....

Q. General reading or files <unclear>?

A. Well, you read ... well, office files and the latest dispatches. And what was particularly uppermost at that time, when we were ... when I was going out there, you know. And of course, the time I was going out there was at the time when we were withdrawing British influence from east of Suez. And there was a great deal of material to be ... current with and to be able to talk about.

But I also ... went to the Foreign Office school to try and ... I took these disks to try to learn Persian and all those.... I tried very hard. I took lessons ... but I never succeeded.

Q. How long was the course?

A. It wasn't ... I mean, it was the one you did mostly at home, you know. It was one of those things. You can't learn, not even knowing Arabic beforehand, so I didn't have much chance. I learned a certain amount.

But I don't think we did.... Ambassadors, on the whole, if they haven't served before in that post, because of pressures and time, don't have enough time between posts to be briefed in the style.... The State Department are better than we are. We were a bit thin on the ground. I only had two

months between leaving Makarios in Cyprus -- something like that -- and appearing, presenting my credentials to the Shah in Persia. You can't do a great deal in two months. But one did one's reading and talking ... particularly the Foreign Office briefing on what was immediately necessary to know. And the rest you pick up when you're there -- en poste, you see.

Q. What were the major concerns at the time?

A. At the time in ... we're talking now about 197- ... I suppose it was '71 ... must be April, '71, thereabouts, at the time. There were a number of key ... immediate issues over -- how soon they came up, I don't know -- immediate issues over things like the Chieftain tank, which we were selling to the Shah at that time. And there were great problems arising out of that. The usual ... he was going through his usual phase of great suspicion about the BBC and Panorama and all these things, which came up intermittently afterwards. I remember meeting that very soon.

And I remember the first time after presenting credentials, with Ardeshir Zahedi, and sitting with the Shah and Ardeshir together. We were talking a lot about the Arab world. I think the main problems in his mind then were Iraq, the potential ... it came shortly after a Soviet defense treaty with Iraq, which shocked him more than it shocked the Foreign

Office. And he ... one had to console him a little bit and reassure him about the longer-term trends. He thought it was very significant.

I think the concerns about the Arab world were very, very prominent at that time in his mind. I think that ... I seem to remember Ardeshir having just come back from Bahrain or somewhere like that, and talking about ... our Arab brothers, or something like that, which I objected to, I remember, and the Shah agreeing. I remember that sort of thing, and Ardeshir always remembers it too.

Those were the ... concerns in his mind. But very shortly after, or even beginning then, we were beginning this process of withdrawing from east of Suez. And that really occupied a lot of the background at the time I was there; because <of>the Shah and his concern <we> didn't want to leave a vacuum and wanted to make sure that his rather grandiose ideas -- they seem grandiose now -- of building up Iran as a middle kingdom -- you know the ideas....

Q. Yes.

A. ...and a road into the Indian Ocean, and building up on Char Bahar as a great base. All these sound rather like visionary castles in the air, but they were very real to him at that time. And a lot of his policies were based on it,

and the purchases he made of British naval craft, destroyers and things, were based on this concept arising out of the knowledge that there would be a withdrawal, not so gradual either, of British influence, not only in the Gulf, where we were about to create the UAE, but also east of Suez generally, in the Indian Ocean.

I think ... it's difficult to pinpoint. If you look ... if you read my dispatches now, you'd know better than I did -- or one of these young students -- what actually was happening. That's my impression.

Q. But the impressions and the feelings, I think, are equally important....

A. That was the overall concerns. They came to a head during that time -- very strongly, of course -- over the actual creation of the United Emirates, which I had a certain part to play in, and.... We did very well -- one of those things the Foreign Office did very well. I mean, we never expected that to put together a collection of little Sheikhdoms, over which we'd had over the years ... had responsibility, defense responsibilities, and turn them into a little federation with only treaties of friendship that we were drawing up <?>. We never thought that would last very long. And it has, I mean, relatively long.

I mean, to put Ras Al-Khaima and Sharjah and all these places into a conglomerate like ... and Abu Dhabi, and.... And put them all into a different relationship of treaties of friendship, not of defense, in that area, with Iraq looking on at Kuwait, and Iran and Bahrain. It was a difficult area to leave intact. But on the whole, by and large, it's been more successful than we anticipated it would. We were very pleased about that.

But during that time, of course, it was a great concern to the Shah, because it was the only outlet for Iran's oil. And the ... he'd gone through his phase over Bahrain, which was in Denis Wright's period, and now his main concern was primarily with Iraq. And that's why the Soviet treaty at that time came at a very awkward time for him. But also, the idea ... I mean, I remember, he used to say ... some analogy that the Israelis had used some bazookas to blow up something and hold something hostage. And he said, "They've only got to have one or two of these in the middle of the Gulf, and they can hold hostage any large oil tanker, and ... I can't allow that to happen. I must be in control as we're expanding, with the British leaving, and not giving that thing to...."

And we were sympathetic. I mean, I know Alec Home, at that time the foreign secretary, and I, we understood that, because ... any country has to defend its national interests,

and the idea of the British presence, with whom, on the whole, I mean, he felt protected by ... and Hoveida felt protected by, in Iran.... The idea of a sudden withdrawal, a fairly sudden withdrawal, was very upsetting -- disconcerting.

This came to an end (I'm jumping now in time), came to a head, in '73, I think -- was it '72 or '73? -- when we did finally make this decision and decide how we would withdraw, with Abu Musa and the Tunbs. You probably remember that. Not many British public would know about that, but it was a cardinal issue for the Shah at that time. Understandably.

As he saw it ... from his point of view, they were very nearly in the center of the Gulf. And this nightmare he had of the Israeli bazookas -- he always talked about them -- they only had to be on the Lesser Tunbs, which was just a rock with a few snakes on them, and, I think, three Indians with a lighthouse, which the Ports and Lights <?> used to look after, that was the British. Sharjah, of course, was larger. And then he felt that he'd be held to ransom, and your fleets and your merchandise and oil, and all that.

And it was at the time when Kharg Island was just being built up, you know, to decide whose it was. So this was a very difficult one to negotiate with him. And he -- as so often with the Shah, you know -- made things more difficult than

they need have been. But there was always a good reason for it. It was never just a whim of a dictator or anything like that; it was a real national ... he represented and felt the national interest and concern.

But I think his innate suspicions, which are historical and personal and psychological, one.... I can explain all that, but you must have heard many others talking about it.

Q. Well, I would like to have <your point of view?>

A. We'll come back to that. But he ... this innate suspicion that he could not trust anybody. I mean, you could be -- I won't blaspheme -- but you could be one of the great saints, Moslem or English saints, and he would listen and try and believe, but something would come in later to undo it in his mind. We'll come back to that.

So he made it much harder than it need have been. And we could easily have come to some arrangement and settlement on the Tunbs. And it went on a long time. And during that time -- those many months -- other things stood still, and he would -- it was rather his fashion, I suppose it was the only weapons he had -- he would threaten to cancel the order for, whether it was Chieftain tanks or whatever it might have been at the time. And he used all these other....

And he overreacted very quickly, as you know. And there was Asadollah, who was ... I used to see a lot of, and of course had breakfast with regularly ... would warn me about and help me, because he was the one who quite often made it possible to avoid a stalemate, where there was no movement at all. And he would bring one together again.

So he, on this particular one -- let me just finish this one -- he was very doubtful and suspicious of the arrangements. Particularly over Sharjah because there was some offshore oil there at stake, and there were some American advisors and interests there, which were rather *louche* (suspicious, fishy), as the French would say. But finally -- I can't remember how we did it, not ... I mean, this is probably just as well that this shouldn't be made public now, but the final thing was that I told him (no doubt on instructions -- I must have had instructions)....

I should say that up to then, we'd been into the greatest detail as to what would happen with the British withdrawal, that's to say when we ended the defense treaties and replaced them by treaties of friendship, what ... how it would affect his interests; what his position would be with the Sheikh of Sharjah, whom he was also independently in contact with; what the position of all the Iranians would be in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Abu Dhabi, where there were plenty of them ... that he wanted to protect; what the conditions would be for the

fleet; and so on.

We had to go into all these things in considerable detail. And he was never satisfied that things were arranged properly, because he didn't know how it would work out. And finally, we ... I told him, 24 hours before the date when we were in fact going to pull out, in a sense, remove our protection from the Tunbs and Sharjah. Ras-al-Khaima nominally were the owners of the Tunbs. And the Sheikh of Ras ... we had to let him down in the end. He had a few policemen on board -- on the island, Greater Tunbs.

And I told the Shah 24 hours beforehand -- casually -- he was a very quick man -- that this would be happening. And in the next 24 hours he sent in Shafiq and the Hovercraft which <unclear>. He made a great thing of it, you know. I'm not sure that the admirals weren't all decorated the next day, as though it was a great battle. In point of fact, I think one policeman was killed. But they landed and they took ... Actually, it worked quite well: they took over half of Sharjah, and the Sheikh of Sharjah had been privy to that, and he remained in the other half.

What happens there today I don't know. Whether Iran is still in half of Sharjah I don't know. You may know.

Q. No. I don't know either.

A. But anyhow, that wasn't a very proud moment for the British Empire, but it was the only way that we could avoid a showdown. That we sort of turned the other eye, and allowed him to take over, while setting up the UAE, which he then was more prepared to support because he felt no longer threatened. He felt that he had at least taken a strategic position on that.

And I personally felt that was right. I mean, regardless of the rights and wrongs, we were talking about something ... lines drawn probably in the seventeenth century, definitely <by> the eighteenth century, by some British naval forces. Because there wasn't a Persian government with any maps at that time. They were all British maps. The whole thing was rather historically -- we used the arguments historically -- illusory. And in terms of the modern day -- modern facts -- it was necessary for Iran, with that very narrow lifeline going out there, to feel at ease and assured about the handover to the new UAE. They knew nothing about it. So it went eventually the right way.

But the ... I'm telling anecdotes to you. Don't mind that as it goes, because....

Q. That's fine.

A. ...we thought, "Well, thank God for that." Because we'd left a lot of energy. I had to drive out ..., the Shah was always on his ... the Caspian. He had a palace up on the Caspian there. And it's a hell of a long way to drive, from the British Embassy to the Caspian. I used to drive there in my Rolls, with my flag flying, sweating away, because one had to sort of dress decently. Although the Shah was always lounging around in sweaters and ... dogs, and things of that kind. But one had to do all that.

So I used to go up there quite a lot. And back again.
During this negotiation.

Q. Why didn't you fly?

A. Never thought of it. I think of those days....

Q. Yes.

A. Maybe, by the time I'd flown, one way or another it would have taken just as long. It was easier to have one's.... I don't know why I didn't fly there.

So when finally we sighed relief that this had all taken place, and the UAE was a fact, and the Shah was fairly satisfied, and so on.

But very shortly after -- and I can't remember quite how ... what happened. I think Iraq summoned a Security Council meeting -- of the Security Council -- and arraigned Iran as having upset the peace -- or whatever it might be -- in the <?>. And we had to hold ... our position in the Security Council was an awkward one. We had to sort of hold the reins there. And I think the Shah felt once again that we were letting him down, and that we didn't support his vision. I can't remember the details, but I do know all his passions came back again, and his antipathies, and all that.

And then I had a brilliant idea -- I think a brilliant idea. One attributes things to oneself which could well have come from many other sources. So that's.... For your purposes, let us pretend it was my idea. It was certainly one I put forward. And I asked that the Queen ... that the Queen would be able to entertain the Shah and the Shahbanou at Windsor Castle during the Ascot races.

You lived in England long enough to know about the Ascot races and remember the first day at Ascot she drives down that lovely ... with thousands of people, in an open carriage, with everybody dressed up and.... And any visiting head of state would be at her side, you see. And this would be perfectly marvellous. And I was very pleased, because....

The Ascot weekend is a family occasion for the Queen: she

goes riding in Windsor Great Park with her family, and they play charades in the evening. It's a family occasion. And she agreed. And it was a great sacrifice, in a way, because this is hard ... the Shah is not the most exciting person. I mean, his sense of humor is not the most exhilarating, and so on. And she knew that; she'd met him many times. And she agreed because I put it to her that this was the one thing I could think of.

It was a great success. It was something that neither the Kremlin, nor the Elysee, nor the White House could conceivably do. And it just turned everything as far as he was concerned. So I'm rather pleased about that.

And if we had time, I would tell you what happened at the occasion.Q. We have time.

A. I mean, I don't want to....

Q. No, no.

A. ...anecdotes. But it's quite interesting, because this was the day before Ascot, and we all went down: my wife and I, and the Shah and the Shahbanou, looking marvellous in her ... gorgeous there. And there was every member of the Royal Family, except Snowden, I think, but everyone else was there: Prince Charles and.... This was '73, it must have been. And

she really put everything on. The plate and silver and gold that nobody had seen -- they'd come out of the vaults. The whole thing was absolutely superb.

And then after dinner, rather late, it must have been about half-past eleven already, the Queen led us all through parts of Windsor Castle which are never open, not only to the public, but to nobody really. And the Queen's librarian had taken great pains, and had put, as we went, in cases, some of the Shahnameh which the Queen has, which is better than anything that the Shah had ever seen. And all her Persian treasures going back ... you know, over the years she'd been given them by the Shahs going ... her ancestors, and so on.

It was very informal. We wandered around, and one moment one was with Princess Margaret, and the next moment with the Shahbanou. And he was treated like a brother. A cousin or a brother. And loved it. About one o'clock ... at the end of ... we were just dispersing, the Queen summoned me and said that she'd like to take the Shah riding with her in Windsor Park early the next day, before the Ascot, before the ... going to the Ascot. And what were his ... preferences and choices.

I'm not a great riding man, but I knew enough about things to say that Persian ... that Iranian men do not ride mares, they don't even ride geldings. I mean, they ride stallions --

it's their point of honor, do you see?

Q. Yes.

A. So I told the Queen that. It's not a British habit, this, at all, as you probably know. But it is an Iranian one. And the Queen was rather taken aback by that, and didn't quite know what to do, because she just hadn't got a stallion. "Oh," she said, "Anne <her daughter>, Anne has a stallion. I think that would be fine for the Shah." And then, with a twinkle in her eye, she said, "There's one problem." And I said, "What is that, Ma'am?" And she said, "The stallion's name is Cossack." And I said, "I'm sure that won't matter." It was a nice little anecdote.

And afterwards, when I got ... I wrote to thank her, saying what I told you, because it was something. It was a sacrifice of her short holiday, family holiday, she had, for an occasion like that.

And, of course, everything changed. When I got back to Iran, my first meeting with the Shah ... everything was light. Quite interesting.

Q. Yes. It is. Thank you for sharing it with me.

A. So that's how that particular episode ended. But it all

came out of this ... background -- I told you, during my two and a half, nearly three, years -- background of concern about this withdrawal of Britain from east of Suez. This is what covered a lot of that period.

Q. What were a couple of other events that still...?

A. Well, of course, not a great, from the point of view of international, historical importance in terms of our relations -- Britain's relations -- with Iran ... was the 2500th celebration in Persepolis, which was a great event. But I don't know how much that....

Q. I forget if the Queen came to that?

A. No. That was one of the awkward things. Would that be something we...?

Q. Sure.

A. We don't want to.... I don't know how much this is going to ... politics, what we're talking about....

Q. We like to get a mixture ... and sometimes, stories ... add richness to....

A. Yes. Well, they might do. I was thinking again of the

student of the future. We don't want to....

Q. No. Please go ahead.

A. It's not my....

Q. No. I'm asking for it.

A. You're asking for it. That's right.

Well, no, the awkward thing was.... Well, first of all, the Shah had this conception, as you know, of celebrating the 2500th anniversary of the great predecessor, Cyrus the Great. Who meant a lot to him. And part of the Shah was Zoroastrian, not Moslem. Part of his makeup and feeling was ancestral.

You know, Kubla Khan -- he used to hear ancestral voices prophesying war in him -- inside him. Very strange mix-up. He once talked to me about feeling like Socrates with his daimon on his shoulder -- fate, you know, speaking to him. He had these very ancient religious feelings. I can't ... I wouldn't have said that he was an actual Moslem, in that sense. And I think this was one of the things that impelled him to create this great concept of the 2500th celebrations of Cyrus the Great.

And we in Britain, of course, went to great pains. We had the, you know, the original seal of Cyrus with a crack down the middle ... on which were all the different languages, when he gave the extraordinary, at that time, liberty of practicing their religions, to Jews, and Assyrians, and Medes, and Persians and everybody. That was our gift from the British Museum. On loan.

And anyhow this concept went forward. And the Queen ... the Shah very much wanted the Queen to come. I had a very difficult time. It was very shortly after I got there. Difficult to explain to him two things. First of all, which I didn't explain, but was a fact, behind my own instructions: the Queen does not go on international jamborees; she goes alone anywhere. Or, if there was a funeral of a member of one of the royal families connected with her, in Europe or anywhere, that would be different. But to what I call, rather disrespectfully, a jamboree, she wouldn't go to a lot of other heads of state. It's not a thing she does. I couldn't explain that to him. And I didn't.

Unfortunately the Queen had also, already, from a year or so before, undertaken to do her first state visit to Turkey -- at the same time. Couldn't have been more awkward. It meant that she was actually on the borders of Iran when this was taking place.

Q. Yes.

A. Couldn't help that. You can't avoid that. So he was not very ... he was rather grumpy about that. He didn't like that. And then he said, "All right. The Queen can't come. Then I'd like the Prince of Wales to come." And I went back, and I had to say, "Very sorry. In ordinary circumstances of course he'd come. But he's young, and he's doing his service in the Royal Navy as a young lieutenant. And we have a system that you cannot interfere with that. He's under the orders of the Royal Navy."

Q. That must have been difficult for him to understand.

A. The Shah couldn't understand that, because it wouldn't be <im>possible in Iran that you could take somebody out and do that. You understand it?

Q. Yes.

A. We could not do it. We couldn't have done it for anybody. And the Shah was a very important person. We wouldn't have done it for the President of the United States. We couldn't. He took a long time understanding that -- never understood it, but accepting that.

Finally he settled for Prince Philip and Princess Anne. Who

came out together and stayed with us, Frances and myself, at our embassy. And then flew us down -- he flew his own plane, the Prince -- flew us down to Persepolis for these great days there. Which were very remarkably ... very, very well done. With all these different tents. And Prince Philip hobnobbed very much with....

Q. You say you flew down with the Prince?

A. We flew down.... Well, Prince Philip piloted his own plane down. And we raced Prince Bernhard down, because they're great friends, and he had the same ... very slow plane, and he was going down. And then, when they were there, they hobnobbed ... you know, these different tents, all done differently.... His great friend was the King of Jordan. They were all about the same age. King Constantine of Greece ... and ... Baudouin of Belgium -- they were all about the same age. And they had fun. They would go to each others' tents and have drinks in the evening. They loved it. It was all a great success. And Princess Anne liked it very much.

And then we all went off to this marvellous meal with Haile Selassie talking Amharic, which nobody understood -- a welcoming speech. It was quite comic, that side. And this great tent.... Oh yes, we'd had -- just to finish this

RAMSBOTHAM-1

off....

I played a little part with your head of protocol at that time ... it begins with Q. Q U?

Q. Gharib?

A. Gharib. Small man.

Q. Yes.

A. Very intense. He became quite a friend of mine. Is he still alive?

Q. Yes, he is.

A. Yes.

Q. I interviewed him in Lausanne....

A. Where is he?

Q. In Lausanne.

A. If you ever see him ... give him my regards, because we worked quite closely together. He was very nice. He said, "You know, the British, we acknowledge, are better than

anybody in the world at protocol and arranging these things. We are new to this, Western style; we could do it, of course, our own way, but we're having everybody here. We'd like you to advise on this."

And so we did. And the long and the short of it was that they got over this problem of: How do you place people? How do you avoid putting the...? Putting out of joint the nose of the President of Bulgaria and the Sheikh of Bahrain? I mean, who goes ... how do you do it? It's never been done before. You see? Without people taking offense. And so we invented a new thing (well, it wasn't new -- anyhow it seemed new): we made the top table like that ... so no one could look down it and see who was above them or below them.

Q. It wasn't a straight line.

A. It was not a straight line. It was shaped like that -- with a node, with nodes and dips like that. And at each nodal point was a member of the Iranian royal family, or prime minister, or equivalent. So you had the Shah there, and the Shahbanou there, and the Crown Prince there, and so on. So ... you could only calculate your status from the nearest nodal point.... Anyhow, you understand the thing?

Q. Yes.

RAMSBOTHAM-1

A. We got over that problem. We didn't have a problem. That was Gharib.

And then we had this wonderful Son et Lumiere up at Persepolis itself, where they showed the soi-disant sacking of Persepolis by Alexander, and the great voice of Artaxerxes coming out from the tomb, and.... It was marvellously done. And I think it did the Shah a great deal of good -- at that time.

There were a number of security problems, just beforehand, because Iraq, I think, had been training assassins in Iraqi territory to start a wave of terror disrupting things, so that ... to demonstrate that the Shah could not keep security. And therefore a lot of people would cancel their ... or would spoil the whole atmosphere. And I think SAVAK were particularly active during that time. And I was very lucky. The American ambassador was almost kidnapped one night. They...

Q. Mr. Mac Arthur.

A. Mr. Mac Arthur. You may remember that?

Q. Yes.

A. And shortly after that.... I was at that time, the

summer ... I had a summer palace at Gholhak, I remember. I used to come down regularly in my Rolls to the summer palace, to the house, with my driver, Madjid, over the same route. And one day, Desmond Harney came in to say, "They've just caught one of these fellows, on a little Japanese bicycle, with hand grenades on him, and all that." And a piece of paper with all my car movements exactly on them, where they were. So ... things could have been ... rather different, if that had occurred.

Q. Yes.

A. But it didn't occur.

And it was a great success for the Shah. That's all I can remember of that, I think -- apart from the detail.

Q. There was also a lot of security around Persepolis at that time.

A. Oh, yes. Just before, a week before, the occasion, the Shah went to Pasagardae. He made the most remarkable speech, which ought to be in the historical records as an indication of something that is strong in his personality. And he said.... He was alone there. He made a speech appealing to the bones of his ancestors. They weren't his ancestors. But he appealed to the bones of his ancestors. It was sort of

Wagnerian -- the language. I wrote a piece on it in Wagnerian terms -- the Goetterdaemmerung and the lot. And it was quite extraordinary. He was almost invoking Cyrus' spirit. Quite extraordinary.

Q. Yes. I remember that.

A. That ... you mustn't forget that. Because that is one of the many elements in this very complex man ... to hold on to. It's what I talked about, the Zoroastrian side, too, which kept on coming through. Very interesting.

Q. <unclear> at what point <unclear> asked you to talk about your understanding of this very complicated,...

A. Well, I.... Who am I to ... I didn't speak the language, I didn't have Denis' background, and so on,

Q. Well, there are many people who think that the only way one can understand what's happened in Iran and to Iran is to really understand what made this man....

A. Well, I think in the first place the obvious thing, I mean, if I was a trained....<coughing>

Q. Would you like some water?

A. I would like water, yes.

ist or psychotherapist, really, to present this properly. And I've no doubt many, many have done it, because it's an obvious example that one would try and analyze.

Q. Well, the more viewers <?> with different backgrounds, the more material there is. Eventually, perhaps,....

A. Yes. Quite. Anyhow, for what it's worth, I will add to it. But I think one would have to take it with that point of view, because you always....

I had great sympathy with the Shah, because ... as a human being. I think that all human beings are.... One has to try and understand. And there he was. I mean, his burden was so great. He was really brought up without any love. I don't know whether his mother loved him. But his ... he had this lonely situation. You've only got to see those early photographs of him travelling with his father on the early railways, and this tense, taut little boy ... young man, under the shadow of this figure. It must have been very difficult.

And the people ... I mean, Asadollah played with him, and one or two other people who ... would tell you. I mean, he had this very, very fraught, his childhood. It wasn't a happy,

easy one. Which is one of the reasons why he really spent so much trouble, I think he did, with his own children. He did really try. I mean, the young Crown Prince, as he then was, used to come running in and sit on his knee. Or not ... no, he didn't sit on his knee ... the younger one, would come to his father when I would be there of an evening. And he would keep me, allow me to stay, while.... He tried. With the children.

I often feel that he'd been deprived of that lovingness, that almost ... tangible, tactile.... People need to be touched when they're children, and I feel he lacked that. I don't know, but my guess is he did.

Then off he went to an entirely alien environment in Le Rosey in Switzerland, where.... Entirely different. And he ... a lot of him was European. And that was at war with his non-European upbringing and background. Very difficult ... for him. And then, I think, he had his early days, where he was ... so-called "weak" -- his weak days. And then the Mossadegh days, and so on, when he left and fled to Rome -- all that period. And then suddenly....

And he was a playboy to a large extent in those days. I mean, when I was out doing the Mossadegh negotiations, he didn't count for anything; we didn't bother about the Shah. We sort of payed our respects, and he was a playboy. He'd

drive very fast cars, and pilot an airplane, and do all those sort of things, which are the sign of a young man trying to be strong like his father. All that. It's a psychological classic case of that sort of thing. I'm not an expert, but I can understand that much.

And then came his turning point. I think when he was nearly assassinated, and he felt he was saved from the bullet. You remember, one of his own Praetorian Guard, and it went right through, and in fact you see his uniform in the museum.... I think that period woke him up, I think, sobered him up very quickly. He became rather a different person. It was almost a change of personality.

I'm talking historically, only from hearsay, so ... I'm not telling you anything which is not known, which is probably better known.

Q. Please go on.

A. Better known by those who were there at the time. But I always felt that was the background to my own understanding of him.

He had great courtesy. I mean, he was never rude, however annoyed or so he was, he was always very polite. And always seemed to have time. Another thing about him. And he

worked.... Talk about working for your country! I mean, he was just work<ing> for his country. As opposed to the earlier young man, who enjoyed himself.

He worked too hard, in a sense, because, I mean, he found it very difficult to delegate. And I remember, towards the end of my time there -- I expect it was late in '73 -- he occasionally gave me the chance to talk about domestic affairs ... very ... not with any view, really expecting any advice, really. And it was only later, I think, quite late before ... in '79, when Tony Parsons actually had some role to play in the constitutional changes and things. That was when the Shah was desperate and weak, so that he was at the.... When I was there, from his own point of view, he was at the apogee, he was at the height of his power, in every way: money and power and physical position, and so on.

But nevertheless, he did occasionally bring the subject round there. Rather rhetorically, he would say, "There have been student riots in Tabriz University." There were always student riots somewhere ... Esfahan or particularly in San Francisco, or what have you -- or something or other. And he would say, "Why are my young people so ungrateful to me when I've done so much for them: all the White Revolution reforms, and education, and all these things?" He would talk like that.

Then I would say to him -- I remember saying it on one or two occasions, "Your Majesty, it's the penalty of your own success. You're paying a penalty because you're going so fast in changing the life of your country. You're westernizing, in a sense, but certainly industrializing, very, very rapidly. And social changes can't be done like that, so quickly. I wasn't saying ... I didn't say that you'd ... any disasters to come, but you had to ... you oughtn't to be surprised, because this is bound to happen if you're doing.... If that's your policy, you've got to pay for it."

And he would always say <unclear> ... he would always say, "Yes. Oh, yes, yes. Maybe you're right." He never actually ... he used to say "yes", and never follow your advice, you know. But he used to say "yes". He would never sort of sweep you aside like that; he was a very courteous person. And always enjoyable, I mean, to talk with.

Except when he was furious, like when I would.... Some unearthly time, while I was playing tennis and a message came through from Asadollah Alam: "You'd better get into your.... When I first went out there, ambassadors had to put their diplomatic uniform on to see the Shah. And most of them did. He unbent a bit, and I was allowed to go up in a morning coat or something. Anyhow, off one had to go, and there was some ... you never knew what it was. Or Asadollah would tell one.

He'd say, "There's been a BBC program, or something, and the Shah's absolutely furious, and wants to cancel the Vosper contract." That sort of thing. It was happening all the time.

And then one would have to talk with him, and try and get the subject.... It was all very personal, I think, as to how he felt, and.... I'm not sure that the policies were very firm. You could change him a bit. And although he didn't have much of a sense of humor, there were occasions when.... And occasionally, I remember saying ... I remember getting angry myself, in a sort of mild way, which had its effect. And saying ... and he'd already put out a statement or something like that. I'd say, "I am paid to be the ambassador at your Court. And you don't even give me a chance of talking to you -- I'd come at any moment -- and explaining or trying to discuss it, before putting this out, and reacting in that way. It really makes it very difficult for our two countries." And I used to complain a bit.

And it actually registered. But very few people did that. And I think he liked it, in a certain sense. It was a dialogue of some kind. Which he didn't have, except for visitors, visiting people. They had a dialogue on their speciality. But he very seldom had it with his own people. That was his fault; he didn't allow it.

And he, of course, wouldn't delegate. But he didn't really, even with Hoveida or Amouzegar, they were ... you would have to see them in his presence. And they would walk out backwards, and all that stuff. It was bad for them. And bad for him. And it was rather pathetic at times. He would try and create an opposition, or get Amouzegar, or maybe Samii, and say, "Go and start an opposition party." You can't do that, in a sentence. But this was all part of his ... he got himself into that position by not delegating at all.

And he found ... on occasion.... I remember coming back from Chah Bahar once, and we were talking together. He again was talking of some.... These were very rare. I mean, I don't want to leave the impression that he wanted my opinion on domestic matters. I don't think he did. We had a lot of other things to talk about, when he wanted to see me. But occasionally -- and I'm only talking about the occasions when there was that opportunity to talk, and there was....

I remember on one, when we were talking about ungratefulness, and how this was going on, saying that one noticed, wherever you went, even way out at Chah Bahar, that the local paper ... there's a new water supply: "Monarch gives water supply to ..." whatever the village is -- Zahedan.... The monarch hadn't given any water supply. And I remember -- I didn't say it like this, I was very ... more tactfully, naturally, but asking whether it wouldn't be possible to give more

credit to the local governor -- or even the poor government! Who got very little credit. The minister of agriculture for these things. Everything was: "Monarch gives...."

And saying, you know, I mean, whimsically, saying that it's very nice now, for the Shah ... but if things started going wrong, it would be very unfair, because he'd be blamed for things he wasn't responsible for, in the same way. And we laughed. You know.

Q. No reaction?

A. I think we laughed. I mean ... as far as he could laugh.... But occasionally one had a chance to say that. I'm only remembering it, because I don't suppose I did it more than once, you know. One mustn't exaggerate what one says -- I think there's always a tendency of people to think they said more than they did. And I don't suppose he.... As soon as I left, he probably forgot. But there were those occasions. And that was his besetting sin, that he could not delegate. Largely, I think, because he couldn't trust. And this must go back to lack of love in his own self. If you've never been loved properly as a child, it's very difficult to trust anybody.

And he had his few faithful, who stuck by him: Eghbal, and Asadollah, and Nasiri -- poor Nasiri -- about three or four

of them, who he had to trust, because they had been tested in the fire and stood by him. But apart from them, and even them, if it had come really to the crunch, he'd have let them down. I'm afraid. And I don't think it was his fault. I mean, I'm thinking that it was his own psychological make-up, from childhood, that brought this about. And that is why he couldn't delegate. And that is why he couldn't ... leave anything behind him, really.

He didn't trust his own son.

Q. Really?

A. His older son. He knew -- and rightly so.... I mean, he spoiled him terribly.

Q. Really?

A. His older son, he gave.... In fact, the Saheb-Gharaniyeh, the palace, where I used ... the Harriman Mission down one end and the Stokes Mission and ourselves up the other. It was a lovely scene of these lovely ... like the water-carriers of the zodiac, and these gardeners would carry these cans and water the geraniums all the way down. And that palace became, when I was there, the young prince's palace. And he had it completely changed. The Shah suggested I should go over it once, look around. I wandered

around, and I could hardly recognize what it was in 1951. They'd changed it around. But it was the same.

And he had every toy. I mean, little engines, and baby aeroplanes, everything. So he was spoilt, too, which is a shame. But he wasn't a very strong character -- he isn't a strong character. And you can't make somebody a strong character. Very nice, I think. And the Shah knew that. And I think he knew.... Whether he said this to me, or Asadollah told me -- because I used to breakfast with Asadollah in that nice avenue in his house, quite a lot, and we used to see each other -- I can't remember. I suspect probably the latter.

That he, the Shah, knowing that his elder son, who was going to be the Shah, hadn't got what it takes, really, to do what he was doing to hold the country together, was putting off his own retirement, and had, I think, decided for himself.... I know that it's true ... I think he said to me -- or Asadollah -- I can't remember which -- that he would carry on til he was 65, or thereabouts, and would gradually retire. But he wouldn't wholly ... he wouldn't leave all the reins of office for that reason. And that's why he was in such a hurry -- much too much of a hurry -- to industrialize and change. It brought about his downfall.

His other son was a stronger character.

Q. Ali-Reza.

A. Yes. If he'd been the older son -- this is only a speculation -- the Shah wouldn't have, I don't think, felt the need to carry out his reforms so rapidly and quickly. I think he'd have felt more relaxed and able to trust his son to ... with his support, to do these things later. So I suspect that was one of the factors -- only one factor -- why the Shah was in such a hurry. And which brought about, as I say, the penalty of his success. He was having to pay. I think so.

Q. Was there ever any discussion of ... or any comparison of ... the Crown Prince in Iran and his counterpart in Great Britain? I mean, even in this tape you've given such a drastic contrast between the Prince of Wales not being able to get a leave of absence and the description of the Iranian Crown Prince's bringing up.

A. I don't remember. You mean, whether I ... in talking with the Shah?

Q. Well, whether there was any consideration of adopting the British model...?

A. I don't think so. Not.... I don't think so. Although

RAMSBOTHAM-1

there were all sorts of experiments, as you know. I mean, they wanted to adopt the ... a certain type of British public school, that they ... on the road to Karaj, I think, they built ... you can see the door-posts to this day, I think, there. For the aristocracy, I mean for the sort of upper class people. To train them in those sort of Western-type of things that you know about. But I never heard it said about the Shah....

Of course, everybody knows the Shah's weakness about the rest of his family. Again, one of the factors, if you ... for his own, his final downfall, that he was so weak in not controlling or resisting the ... greed -- one must use that word -- for his family. I think they behaved badly. I think we all agree to that. And I think that was one of his weaknesses. That he allowed that to happen. Which gave such a bad image to his own people.

But I'm bound to say that it never occurred to one, in my time there, that he could fall from power. I think in '73 -- '72-'73 -- when he was, as I say, at the height of his powers, he had control.

I mean, every two years, the Shah would sack all his top admirals. Just like that. I've forgotten their names, now <unclear>. And they'd come in on a morning and find somebody else sitting there. And there was no.... Occasionally, they

RAMSBOTHAM-1

were made a serviteur, but on the whole they were treated very brusquely. And it was probably the right way to do it. In that environment. It ensured that he was Commander-in-Chief. Because look what happened later. One of the ... the head of the navy tried to seize power a few years later, didn't he? I've forgotten his name now...?

Q. Gharani?

A. Just before Khomeini. Wasn't there one of the ... the head of the navy?

Q. There was one sacked for corruption, called Ramzi Attaie, but....

A. Oh, was it Attaie? Yes. That was the one. He had a very pretty wife.

Q. I don't know.

A. That's right, Attaie. Though perhaps.... I thought there was one today. Isn't there a head of the navy who's one of the...? Anyhow, it doesn't matter. I'm wrong. I'm wrong about that.

But in order to avoid that happening, that's why he did that. And so he was very autocratic, in that sense. And he was a

really good Commander-in-Chief of the army. He knew it all. He knew the details.

I remember when we were selling the Chieftain tank to the Shah. It was very awkward, because he had laid down specifications for the tank to operate in the very hot area of the south -- south of Kerman -- and areas, sandy areas, where they wanted quite different specifications -- it was a very technical tank. And we came along with the experts from London, and he went through this great book, and, sure enough, in the specifications there was something very technical. It was wrong. And he spotted it. No one else did.

Q. Really?

A. And he would.... He blew up. And he would say.... I remember him asking me, "What is the sprocket horsepower of the Chieftain tank, Ambassador?" I'm terribly bad at any figures, anything like that, you see. And I'd learnt by this time. And I would say, "Your Majesty, you know I'm very bad at figures. You tell me. You are the <?>." Because he knew all the time, you see. He liked that. And that was the nearest he came to a sense of humor, there. That's how you.... But he was very, very good, and he controlled the detail of all that very, very closely.

But ... how did we get...? Your question went back to the Crown Prince. No, I can't think of that, but I think, as I say, the rest of his family ... he behaved very badly, was very weak, with them. His strengths were elsewhere, as I've explained.

Q. Well, this question of so-called corruption, for lack of a better term, has come up a lot in these interviews. And I've had ministers, security officers of the SAVAK tell me that they had brought the question to the Shah, asking him for some directives to sort of contain some of these things. And his reaction basically was that, well, it was <?> the economy, it ... merchants can make money, why can't you know, X and Y make money, or somebody's getting a commission? Saying, "Well, don't civil servants ... get bribes, so why are you...?"

A. He didn't care. He not only didn't care, but the Pahlavi Institute got their cut pretty rapidly.

Q. Pahlavi Foundation.

A. And Shahpour.... I mean, everybody knew.... What do you...?

Q. The Pahlavi Foundation.

A. The Pahlavi Foundation got their out.

Q. Yes.

A. Everywhere. And Reporter, Sir Shahpour Reporter. Who should never have been made a "Sir". Got his. Where is he living now? In Switzerland?

Q. Right here. Rutland Gate.

A. No. How does he hold his head up? I can't think.

Q. Well, people say that it seems whatever he did was on behalf of the British government. Isn't that true?

A. No. <whispered>

Q. Most people tell me. That's why he ... the fact that he was made "Sir"....

A. Oh, of course it was. Absolutely. No, no. I mean, you're absolutely right. I mean, a lot of the contracts and things that British firms got ... you're absolutely right. Not of the British government so much, but a lot of British firms got their contracts because of his good offices. No question about that. But to make him a "Sir" just for that -- I never understood it. Why? He didn't....

Q. Why do you think that Shahpour <unclear> corruption?

A. In the first place, I think he ... his family were very corrupt ... <unclear> he really got into it, it had gone all the way up. And I don't think that ... was too much for him to take on.

Secondly, corruption is a relative word. And you have to see from which standpoint you judge it. We're talking about.... You're partly Westernized, yourself, so you can understand this view. We're talking about the twentieth-century view, from a small part of the world called Britain and America, shall we say, Europe and America. The twentieth-century view about this question. If you went back 200 years to the eighteenth century, the attitude to what we are talking about, this type of corruption, was quite different. And the ... Iran was probably in the seventeenth century, compared with us. I don't mean culturally....

Q. I understand.

A. I regard Iran as more advanced than Britain, if you can compare countries at all, in terms of culture and civilization. I'm not talking about that. I'm just talking about these other modes. It used to annoy me, this -- it annoys me on these programs like End of Empire when they make

these moral comparisons. I'm not excusing, I'm trying to -- I was a historian before I was a diplomat -- trying ... I think we ought to understand that ... we forget that ... when we look at the world, we forget that countries ... we know, we accept, it's obvious, that countries are separated in space, we forget that they're also separated in time. We think they're all living in the same time. It's not true. It can't be true. I mean, there are some countries, in Africa, where they're just coming out of the Stone age, practically.

And it's even true of our countries. Iran had quite a different history, in terms of what we're talking about: social mores and corruption and all that. There's no strong civil service in Iran. There's no strong, established police force. You've got every conceivable type: you've got tribes, you've got Arabs, Kurds -- quite a different problem to keep control over that country. It's very different. And in order to do it -- I don't say SAVAK didn't exceed that -- but you have to have SAVAK methods which are quite unnecessary in Britain. You had to have them there.

You ought to compare Iran with sixteenth-century Britain -- in that respect. Where we had to ... had the Star Chamber, remember? The Star Chamber, which acted exactly like SAVAK. Corruption -- you'd call it corruption; people didn't have a proper civil service to walk ... the only way they could get

RAMSBOTHAM-1

on was by having a patron or by paying for it, or doing this.
That's how we were in the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries. And that's how you are in the twentieth century.
People don't understand that.



HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INDEX OF TRANSCRIPT

NARRATOR: RAMSP RAMSBOTHAM, PETER
TAPE NO.: 02

ALAM, ASADULLAH, BACKGROUND AND CHARACTER OF

CLERGY, POLITICAL ROLE OF

CORRUPTION

FARAH, SHAHBANOU, ACTIVITIES OF

GREAT BRITAIN, INVOLVEMENT IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

HOVEIDA, AMIR-ABBAS, BACKGROUND & CHARACTER OF

KHALATRAHI, ABBAS-SHOLI

KHATAN, GEN. MOHAMMAD

MI-6

NASIRI, GEN. NEMATULLAH

NIKPAY, GHOLAM-REZA

PAHLAVI FOUNDATION

REGENCY COUNCIL OF 1979

REPORTER, SHAPOUR (ARDESHIRI)

SHAH & ARMS PURCHASES

SHAH, CHARACTER OF THE

SHAH, CORRUPTION UNDER THE

SHAH; FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE

SHAH, ILLNESS OF THE

SHAH, RULE & ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE OF THE

SHIRAZ ART FESTIVAL

WRIGHT, SIR DENIS

ZAHEDI, ARDESHIR, AS AMBASSADOR & FOREIGN MINISTER

IRANIAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Narrator: Sir Peter Ramsbotham

Date: October 18, 1985

Place: London, England

Interviewer: Habib Ladjevardi

Tape no: 2

I wanted to say that on the television. They cut it all out, because it would have been very unpopular.

Q. <unclear>

A. No, it would have been very unpopular there, you see. It was exactly contrary to what they were trying ... because they were piously making condemnatory judgments about another country ... totally different background to ourselves ... in terms of what happened to be a rather narrow set of moral precepts of the British twentieth century. That's what they were doing.

Q. There ... another interpretation of this question by some is that the Shah was so eager to have loyal lieutenants that the business of having them gain some financial benefits was sort of....

A. <unclear>

Q. ...as a token of repayment to them.

A. As a sop. Yes, probably. Probably, because there ... were so few other ways.... I don't know, maybe ... I hadn't of that, it's very interesting. I think that's probably right. They're so few other ways in which he could ... respond to that very natural human instinct of being recognized, of pride, of having a name, of having a high standard of living, so your children can see it, and so on.

There were very few other ways of doing it. He didn't have ... the civil service -- with great respect -- there didn't give you that status. You couldn't be made Sir Somebody Somebody-or-Other and have that position in the civil service. And even in the services, your position, as you see, the admirals being sacked and ... it wasn't at all secure. So how do you give them that? That is quite a good point. That may well have been one of the reasons. I hadn't thought of that. But that appeals to me as one of the reasons.

And the other one we had just touched on is, of course, that, as you say, the Pahlavi Foundation profited too, so.... You know, what's goose <sauce> for the gander and all that. I

think that may be one of the reasons for it.

And people used to come and seek my advice -- not only British, but Canadian and other businessmen -- as to what was the going rate for those days. One had to give some advice on that, I remember.

Q. It's said that it was around five or ten percent. Is that...?

A. I don't know. I've forgotten what the actual thing was. Later on, of course, it all came out in America, with the ITT, and all that ... problems. But there was no other way in those days in which one could do these things.

Q. Another question I'd like to get your response to is: as you know, there is this conception among Iranians about this overwhelming British influence on Iran and on the Shah, in particular. Now, hearing you speak, one of the first things you said was the Shah in a way influenced the decision to select you as the ambassador to come to Iran.

A. In that case, he did, I think.

Q. So it shows that he had some power over....

A. Yes. I hadn't thought of that, but it's true.

Q. And then you also talked about some of your meetings with the Shah, and the fact that you had to sort of limit the topics that you discussed with him.

A. Yes.

Q. And it sounded like only on a few occasions you discussed domestic politics.

A. That's right. Yes. That would be true. I mean, if you asked Denis Wright this question, the occasions on which Denis Wright would have had an opportunity to discuss domestic politics, I doubt if they were more than mine. I doubt it. I don't know if you remember....

Q. Yes. Yes.

A. I doubt if he did.

Q. Yes. Could you sort of address yourself more fully to this question, of the relative influence of the British ambassador over the Shah, and the Shah's influence over the British ambassador.

A. Yes. I think we're talking about two different things.

Q. How often did you see him, first of all?

A. Once a fortnight. I think he saw the American, the British, ambassador, obviously, more regularly than anybody else. Once a fortnight, I would guess. When there were things on, like Abu Musa and the Tunbs, then we met more frequently.

And then I would go ... I would travel with him sometimes. I mean, we were going to open IGAT <?>, or the gas pipeline, or something -- where there was a British thing. I would go down there and take part in that sort of ceremony. Or up in Tabriz or somewhere. And one saw him on those occasions, too.

And then, of course, I would see him, perhaps more regularly, when there were visitors. I mean, if the British minister of defense was out here, Peter Carrington would come and stay with me, we'd go and see the Shah for half an hour. And that was much more ... that could happen any time, depending when they came. He was always accessible. He worked so hard. I mean, a twelve-hour day was nothing; he never stopped. That was so.

But on this question of influence, you see, I think there were two separate things. One is the actual occasions when -- I'm talking about the British ambassador's influence, or

British foreign minister through the ambassador. There's a point in which you might say ... like in the past, when <there was> a weak Shah, some hundred, two hundred years ago, there might be a British ambassador who would say, "I'm sorry, we have a gunboat out there, and we wish the troops to do this, that, and the other." Maybe in the last war a sort of situation like that would have occurred. That's one form of influence. And that didn't occur.

But the other was much more insidious, which you must know very well about, which is the general belief that even the Shah half-shared, intelligent as he was, which was much more shared the further you went down in the country, that there was this sort of curious, insidious British influence. Nobody quite knew how it came or what it did, but that it had never left the country, and it was there. And it would take ludicrous forms, like that Mossadegh was really a British agent, and that sort of thing.

And the Persian mind -- which is why I love Persia so much, because it's a land of poets, and I just love all that, but they're not very good in this sense -- is so fertile and inventive that they can almost create pictures for themselves which ... and half believe it. You don't wholly believe it, but half believe it. And this, I think, is symptomatic also, and I think, of the Shah, insofar as he's very Persian. I use the word "Persian" because I....

The Shah said to me once -- I must just divert for a moment, I'll come back -- said.... I can't remember what happened. I said.... During the time ... one of his real hates against Iraq. And I don't know what prompted me, and I said, "You know, Your Majesty, I find it difficult, and certainly the British people, sometimes reading the paper ... find it difficult to distinguish between Iran and Iraq. You know, it's.... There's Persia. They know Persia, sixteenth century, <unclear> and all that. It's known. They know about Persia: Persian music, Persian literature, and all that. Iraqi literature -- nobody ever heard of it. But it's a great pity, that, and I know that your father ... that it had to be, and that it's correct from the point of view of geography and Farsi and all those things. I understand that. But it's a trend <?>. And I would like to have occasion when I could...."

"Oh," he said, "use the word Persia whenever you like." He said -- just like that. You know the thing. And I kept that to myself. And then I did it. I never told Hoveida. I did it. Hoveida ... Persia. He was very upset. And then I let it be known through ... (was it Raji, or somebody, his private secretary?) ... I said that the Shah had approved of my doing this. Just a side story.

But this insidious influence, it comes out very well in Denis

Wright's last book about the Persians and English. I mean, it comes out in the introduction very well there too. I wrote a little blurb on the same theme for it.

They can't believe.... I'll tell you another anecdote which illustrates this silent influence. That poor Nikpay -- it's so sad, little Nikpay, the mayor -- very able man. And I got to know him quite well, and my wife got to know his wife, and so on. And one day he rang up or said he'd ... if I had time, would I like to see southern Tehran, because he'd done a lot of improvements there, and he'd like to take me around. There was an abbatoir, you know, a slaughterhouse, he was particularly proud of, and all that. Not many British ambassadors have a chance of going to all that part of southern Tehran, so I said yes. "Well," he said, "I'll pick you up at the doors of your embassy, in Ferdowsi Avenue, and we'll go off together."

He picked me up alone; he was driving his car alone. I think there were ... I noticed a car behind, that's all right. And off we went. And we went round the other.... And I said to myself, after about two hours -- it was very interesting -- "Why -- he's such a busy man -- why does he want to take me all around southern Tehran? He's a friend, but I mean.... You know, it's very nice, but it's not all that important for him." And yet, on the way back ... it was very subtle, you had to really listen to it, but what it came to -- and I

assure you, I'm not kidding -- he was really ... I mean, he was wanting me to use my influence with the Shah to make him prime minister.

Q. I thought he was so close to Hoveida?

A. And that's a fact. Now isn't that interesting? And the point is that, if he'd known the circumstances which we are talking about, that the opportunities for any British ambassador -- and I'm pretty certain, I can't talk for him, I'm pretty certain it went for Denis Wright's eight years there, too -- to actually discuss, or the Shah asking your opinion, about who should be prime minister, or that, are very, very rare -- few and far between.

Didn't you get that impression from Denis?

Q. Yes. Yes. I'd like <unclear>.

A. No, no. I know. I'm not.... Of course you do, but I mean, I....

Q. Yes.

A. I don't think I'm saying anything different. And yet, almost impossible for Iranians to accept that. And here's a man as intelligent as Nikpay, as Westernized as Nikpay, who

thought still ... something in him was very, very Persian, and he believed that.... He didn't ask the American ambassador this. He's much more powerful.

Q. So basically, the major points of discussion between the British ambassador and the Shah were foreign policy and commercial?

A. Foreign policy, that's right. Foreign policy, commercial. And general. I mean, he very much appreciated assessments of what we thought the Russians were up to, what was really happening in Afghanistan, and that sort of thing. I mean, he liked talking about these things; he liked a global view. And on the oil industry, which I knew a certain amount about; I'd been head of the oil department in the Foreign Office in the Mossadegh days. And all that. He liked to know about that and discuss that. But he didn't welcome discussions of.... And, of course, if there were a Queen's visit, we'd talk about Persepolis and those sort of internal things. But he didn't really want to talk about his policies in the country.

Unless I had.... Supposing I had the British minister of Education out to stay with me, and I took him to see the Shah for a talk he was interested in. And he'd talk about education and schools. And he'd talk about his education program, and comment, and that sort of thing. That's

different. But I don't think he'd want to talk with me about it unless I had some visitor who sparked it off. I think that's fair.

Q. Now, <unclear> talk to me about this sort of frame of mind among some Iranians, they would say, "Yes, the British ambassador wouldn't be involved in this kind of discussion. But the MI-6 man who went to see the Shah every week, he was the one who would be talking to him about these subjects."

A. I don't think so. I don't think so. It depends. Some of them, in the past, may have done, may have had those discussions. I don't think so, because I saw all their reports. I mean, the great thing about MI-6, as you call it, abroad, as compared with the CIA -- Well, it's better now -- is that the American ambassador didn't control the CIA properly. He knew they had to be kept informed, like that, but he didn't control them.

Whereas I'd have been absolutely furious -- furious -- if the MI-6 representative and his staff had done anything or said anything like that, which I didn't know about.

Q. Really?

A. Oh, yes. I couldn't ... I didn't necessarily.... Quite often I would ask them to find something out for me, and this

type of thing like that. And I didn't control them wholly, in that sense, I mean, they had their office, and all that. And from the point of view of the people who they operated with, Iranians that they operated with, and the SAVAK, that all went on every day.

But I used to go and have dinner with Nasiri and my MI-6 representative, and all that type of thing. It was very much more intimate. I very much doubt if that happened on the American ambassador's side. I don't know. He might have become.... Certainly it didn't in the earlier days.

So, I don't think that.... And I saw all reports. So I can't recall anything of substance that went on between the Shah and an embassy representative that was of a different dimension to what the Shah and I talked about. I'd have remembered it if I had. I don't remember it.

Q. What was the purpose of this <unclear>?

A. I think he liked.... First place, I think he liked the personal touch of someone who didn't represent the whole weight.... It was rather ... it was a slight facade ... it didn't represent the weight of the foreign secretary and all that, as I did. Where what he said to me would be recorded in an official telegram or something from the British ambassador.

There was a convention, which he accepted -- it worked very well and improved over the years -- that he was chatting with somebody who ... with whom he could convey points informally. It was very, very useful. And I made use of it, because there were things, little things, that one could ... a word one could put in on this, that, or the other, which I didn't want to make too heavy or weighty in a direct exchange. And also, they were very good. I mean, they knew what the Shah wanted to know. They knew what the Israeli intelligence were up to, and all those sort of things. And all these different things like that, which were very useful for him. I think that was a very important.... It went back for many years, you know, the connection there.

Q. Was the man a younger type? Or was he sort of the same...?

A. A younger type. Oh, yes. Yes, younger type, and ... some years before I came, he'd be.... I mean, the Shah was younger. I mean they'd go off to the night clubs together, perhaps. That sort of relationship, you know, in the past. And I think helpful. But never was there a ... to my knowledge, not in my time -- and I don't recall stories of it before -- where that particular connection was doing something not in line with what the ambassador was doing. I don't think so.

I can ask you a question? I don't see why I shouldn't. Have you got ... I mean from your talking with all the other ... some of the other names you mentioned and so on, have you had a different impresssion from that?

Q. No.

A. No. I mean, you....

Q. While you were there, what impression did you have of the Queen's, of Shahbanou Farah's, power? And role?

A. Ahhhh. On certain things.... On cultural matters, at one time, very considerable. And I think she did have a quieting effect on him, a sort of soothing effect on him. And it was very remarkable. I mean, if she made a ... if she went to Kerman, Hoveida would go with her, and it would be a process. It wouldn't.... She had a ... the Shah obviously.... And that couldn't have happened if the Shah didn't wish it to happen. So one must assume that he attached importance, too, to her playing that role. And the ... with all the festival at Persepolis, and that ... which I think she carried much too far, incidentally. I think she must have shocked a lot of mullahs in some of the things she put on. Which probably had some effect on what happened later, I'm afraid. That's a minus I put against her.

But in all other respects she was a great plus. My wife saw a lot of her. They used to ... they did together ... they ... all the ancient costumes, you may remember if you were there at the time, and they all paraded together. And the history of the women's costumes down the ages in Persia. All those things she did beautifully. And we took distinguished people to see her too. No, I think she led ... perhaps she was used to it, but I mean he had his own amours quite separate from her, which were fairly crude. And I don't think she could have liked that very much.

Q. But in the area of politics, do you think she had much influence?

A. No, I don't. None at all politically. I mean, in terms of: "Shall I sack those admirals?" or whatever it is ... or Abu Musa, Tunbs ... none at all. I doubt if they talked about it. I doubt that.

But they had these reunions: Mondays was with his mother ... and I've forgotten, you know. And occasionally one went to these things and one could sort of get some sort of atmosphere. It was all right.

But I think her cultural influence was considerable. She raised standards. And a lot of the things that ... she was

so intelligent, and a lot of the projects that he backed were invaluable, I think. And he wouldn't have thought of them.

Q. How about Princess Ashraf?

A. I didn't know her so well. I think by the time I got there, you see -- I'm talking about ... I got there in '71 -- she'd played her role, in a sense.

Q. I see.

A. I think I'm right. You'll recollect better than I do. But I think from '71 onwards she wasn't there very much.

Q. In Europe and America.

A. In Europe and America most of the time. I only saw her ... I met her once or twice ... saw her in America, actually. I think the influences had been before. Denis Wright would have spoken about that better than I would.

His brothers I saw a certain amount of. And ... his brother-in-law, particularly, who was the head of the air force, who died, unfortunately.

Q. What was he like?

A. I liked him. He was a sort of ... he was out of one of these American comic magazines -- not comic -- magazines. I mean, he was very good-looking, incredibly brave, did everything, and was all very macho, you know. And his wife, of course, the Shah's younger sister, they were very cheerful. They used to have one to supper there. And this enormous cinema screen would appear from the ground, and we'd.... It was all very nice, like that, but fairly superficial and rather childish, if you like. But he was a marvellous ... very ... I mean he built up the Amer-- ... Iranian air force, you know. He was very good.

Q. You almost said "American air force".

A. Well, it was. Yes, yes. Well, of course it had to be. How can you...? I mean, so it is in all countries.

Q. What did your air force people think of his competence?

A. Oh, I think very much.

Q. Was he as good as they say he was?

A. Oh, I think so. I mean, he was.... I'd been High Commissioner in Cyprus before that, as you know, and I had a certain interest in that. But one time when we arranged ...

and the Iranian air force, the Phantoms, under his command did an exercise over Cyprus and round and back. It's a very difficult thing to do, I mean technically, so I'm told. And our people, who are pretty critical, you know, like sort of saying, "Only we can do it" -- they were very well impressed. I think he was the best ... I think that was the best of your three services ... at that time. As I recall.

Q. Why was Asadollah Alam so close to British ambassadors?

A. That's a very good question. I think he.... He was very close to them. I think he just liked the British ... way. I don't know how ... I don't know when it all started. Did it go back...? I mean, Denis Wright particularly, they used to ride together, they had so much in common, used to go skiing together in Europe. Did it go back beyond Denis? It did, did it?

Q. I don't know. Before that, you mean?

A. Yes.

Q. I don't know.

A. That would have been Harrison's days, and.... I don't know, but he was certainly.... And I inherited all that from Denis, and saw a great deal of him. Although I didn't go

riding with him in the same way, but.... I think he just ... they liked each other. I think he liked our ways, and ... I don't think he was very.... I don't think he was particularly enamored of the American way. I think he rather -- I'm only guessing now -- I think he likened himself a little bit to the English aristocrat. Which is not the same as the American tycoon.

Q. Right.

A. I think so. And out in.... Where was he out? In...?

Q. Birjand.

A. Birjand. I don't know. You know that part of the world is very much a world of its own there. And ... I mean, he gave me when I left one of the carpets they'd made at Birjand and all that. I think it was.... He was a great ... I think a great "Marcher Baron", who lived on the Welsh Marches in the fourteenth century. I mean, he was a kinglet, a duke, in his domain. That's British ... in a sense. Looking after his people, rather stern. And some people had had their heads cut off, well, too bad, that's to keep law and order, but it's fair. And so on.

And that's not an American concept at all. I'm only guessing, but I suspect that's where the affinity lies. And

riding, and all these things -- honor -- acts of honor and dignity. He liked that.

Q. What sort of influence do you think he had over the Shah?

A. Enormous. Well, I don't think anybody.... I think the Shah was quite extraordinary. For a man who was initially weak, in one sense, as it came out later, I think ... I don't suppose.... I mean, I think he prevented the Shah doing things; I doubt if he made him do many things. I think that's true of them all. But I'm sure he was probably the most influential -- consistently -- on different subjects. And the Shah relied on him enormously, and he was invaluable to him ... used him.

And they had had this boyhood experience, you know. As, indeed, Shahpour Reporter had. This is where the.... The Shah couldn't trust anybody, so he had to go right back to his childhood to find these links, I think.

But I think he had a great deal of influence. Certainly, every message, everything I wanted, immediately went to the Shah. I mean, he just had his ear all the time. Because he never stopped, you see. Every day he saw him. I mean, he never had an evening to himself.

I always felt sorry for her. He had a lovely home; I used

to go to his lovely home. He hardly used his home.

Q. By "her" you mean Mrs. Alam?

A. His wife, yes. Who is now in London.

Q. Yes.

A. Because, I mean, it wasn't ... he isn't ... he was a very fine husband, but he'd ... given his life to the Shah. It wasn't a home life.

Q. There are those friends of his who say that he was sort of disenchanted in the last years of his life because he had no longer any influence.

A. I think he was probably quite happy to die. Because I don't think he had any other interests in his life. His children turned out unhappily. And nothing went well. I think he died at the right time. A lovely man. So nice-looking.

Q. Did you ever get to meet or know General Fardoust?

A. Not well. Yes. You've seen him, have you?

Q. General Fardoust.

A. Oh, General Fardoust, who was at the....

Q. He was in the intelligence in Iran and Iraq, and there were all kinds of stories....

A. All the stories about him now. I knew him. He was number something or other -- I don't remember what -- in my day. There was another, a number two, in SAVAK who I used to ... it began with M ... who I saw a lot of. Very intelligent man -- I've forgotten his name.

Q. Mo'tazed.

A. Yes. Something like that. That's right. Mo'tazed. So I do certainly remember him. Well, you ask me names, but I wouldn't be as good on ... I wouldn't be all that good on them. What was the other thing I was going to say? Something.... Well, never mind.

Q. What do you remember about Hoveida?

A. An amusing man. You smile even asking me about him. Because everybody does. There's a man of great civilization and culture. But the French stamp never left him. He was ... it came through. And if you talk about the Shah or Asadollah ... favoring, if you like, the British, well

Hoveida had the same attitude to France. Partly his upbringing, and partly the ... he had worked for the French ... the IPC and all that, in the oil industry. And an amusing, witty man. It's very sad. Poor Hoveida.

But I don't think he had a lot of scruples, either. He couldn't do. Not very easy to hold that job as long as he did and keep going, you know, with a man as difficult as the Shah. As his successor showed. I mean, look what happened after him. So if you compare him with what happened after. Someone as intelligent as Amouzegar -- what happened to him. It shows what a good job Hoveida did in the circumstances, I would think. It has to be relative. You can't judge him in the absolute. And he was witty, and amusing, and....

I didn't have many occasions when I actually saw him with the Shah. I did with other people, but I never saw him just when the two were there, so I can't judge. I should think it'd be a sad spectacle. I suspect. Because the Shah....

Q. Did you have any occasion to meet with the foreign minister? Or were all your dealings with the Shah?

A. Oh, no. Mostly with ... I mean, I'd see the foreign minister on day-to-day things.

Q. Really.

A. Oh, yes. And it was rightly so. And it's unfair -- but I made a point of it. I mean I wouldn't.... It's not fair on Zahedi, who wasn't a very good foreign minister; he was too ebullient and powerful in other respects. But poor Khal'atbari, it was very unfair, poor man. I would make a point of telling him everything. I mean, because I'm a civil servant; I'm trained that way. If I'd been a ... if I was a political appointment, I might not have thought like that. But you can't run a country ... and a foreign ministry, which has to send instructions to ambassadors, can't operate if the foreign minister is not fully in the picture. And although I needn't have done so all the time, I made a point of -- and I think it's right -- of Khal'atbari knowing pretty well everything I was telling the Shah. Had to build him up, you know. It was very important to do that.

That's a nice man. Courteous. A charming wife. Very nice person. Oh -- so sad. He never asked to be foreign minister, want to be ... elevated to that and then killed. Very sad. But I liked him a lot.

And Ardeshir rang me up last week. He's over ... he was over in London. He's just left. Gone back to Geneva. I don't know, I suppose he lives surrounded by guards, does he? Security guards?

Q. I don't know....

A. Ardeshir.

Q. No.

A. He was a character. Because the Americans had never seen anything like him, when he was ambassador there. They never quite got over ... caviar every day A character.

Q. What's happened recently with the BBC? How do you now look back at the Shah's sort of suspicion that the BBC in fact....

A. Yes.

Q. ...listened to the foreign office...?

A. Yes. Well, I think it's still the case. I think it's still the case. I mean, it just.... I think it's the exception that proves the rule. I think it must have been a great shock to the BBC when the prime minister, or whoever it was, let it be known that this couldn't happen. Because he was such a.... I mean, it was thought to be such a monstrous thing that the exception must be risked despite the sort of conclusion that you might draw from it, and others. I think it was the exception. And I think it's very rare.

It may have not had that effect, but it was certainly not true in my day. I was always in trouble because Panorama never sent their top team to Iran. Their top team would probably go around the UK or to America, at the most, <unclear>, and they were usually second-rate people who came out. Who were wanting to make their name cheaply and quickly. Which is so easy to do. And therefore they would go and televise some scene of poverty in Esfahan or something like that and present it. And of course the Shah was furious. And over-react.

Q. Did he actually see the films? Did they fly them over?

A. Oh, I think so. Or he'd get a report on them, and that sort of thing. And he always thought, as you know, that the BBC Persian Service was riddled with people who opposed him. Which was not true. But those were <?> things. I mean, those things every British ambassador had to accept and go on. They recurred, and one would quiet him. And I remember, as I told you, on one of these occasions, when I felt angry and indignant, and said, "You really must consult me before reacting on these things, then I will explain." So they became fairly frequent, but you'll never get that out of their mind. It's still part of this suspicion, the Nikpay Syndrome, we can call it, which everybody has. And I suspect most of your countrymen have it.

Q. Yes.

A. And will always have it. Even if the Archangel appeared and assured everybody that this was so in 1700 or whenever it is, it is not so now, they would still half-think that, not wholly, but half-think. So there's nothing you can do. You just have to live with it. In my judgment.

Q. I have one last question.

A. It's interesting. Q. My last question has to do with the -- what shall I say? -- extent or.... Well, anyhow, I won't put it that way. To what extent, if any, did the British embassy, including its intelligence arm, maintain contact with the clergy?

A. Well, I wish we had more. We didn't. We didn't. Or hardly at all. I mean, for instance, when I was there, I only just knew about Khomeini as a name. And that was.... And one of the reasons -- this is obvious -- but one of the reasons why we didn't was that, in a sense, the clergy would be regarded.... If we'd done that, the Shah would have regarded that as potential opposition to him. Anything was potential opposition, apart from his own contacts. SAVAK, which was everywhere, would have reported in some, probably exaggerated, way, whatever the contacts were, however minor

they were.

I was in contact with the Kurdish leader, who came to my ... insisted on seeing me in my garden at Gholhak. I rang up Asadollah beforehand to tell him. To avoid any exaggerated stories from some SAVAK person, probably on my own staff, who would have reported it. You see?

So, how do you manage? It's not very ... it's not very bold, it's not a very dignified thing to say, but the fact is that if, like Britain, we were wanting to sell a lot of Chieftain tanks to the Shah, have a quiet life, and increase Britain's balance of payments, and all that. And here you had a man who overreacted very quickly. Why risk losing a British interest -- which is what the government's job in life for the British people is, to advance the British interest -- by making a contact with somebody else in a time when, as far as we could see, there was no reason why the Shah shouldn't continue?

We weren't in favor of him, but, I mean, the alternatives were not as good, probably. And he was in charge of the services; as I say, he sacked his admiral. As far as I could see, SAVAK was loyal to him; the army was loyal to him. He'd got a regency arrangement if he died suddenly, with the Queen and Asadollah and others ... Eghbal, I think. I've forgotten what it was. And I went into all that. There was no reason

to believe.... Lots of discontent: students, goodness knows what.

And one of my last.... I wrote a valedictory dispatch in December '73, before I left for America, which was what? --six years before he went -- summing things up. In which I said that the only possible discontent was the mullahs, I thought -- or words to that effect. I remember the passage. Because they ... I always felt that the mullahs in Persia, whatever you may say about some of them, were exceptional in Moslem countries -- very close to their villages, very close to their villagers. If you travelled, as I did, a lot, they actually, the good ones, represented their villages. They knew what was going on. They were good people. They weren't like the Buddhists in some of these countries, just political creatures. They were good people. They minded.

And I felt -- and I picked it up somewhere -- they were getting ... they minded, they resented the vulgarization of Tehran, for instance. The vulgarity which was coming in with all this get-rich-quick industrialization. The dollar and the pound, it's always the vulgar and ugly side of British and American civilization -- not what you know. It's the ugly side that comes in when you drag imports in, and people coming out to make money quickly in Iran. All that was hurting Iran.

It's one of the oldest cultures in the world -- this wonderful country -- and deep religious roots in the people, moral and religious roots. You've only got to travel around the villages to feel that and know that. And here was all this cheap vulgarity and porn -- all sorts of things coming in. That must have hurt and shocked -- and I'm sure it did -- a lot of the mullahs. We were talking about mullahs. A lot of ordinary Iranians, too. Secular people, who were religious. And I felt that.

And you've only got to see these doctors in Tehran, with their enormous swimming pools and the like. It was bad. It was greed. Greed had got in. And the Shah had let it in. It's part of what we were saying about allowing corruption just because it was <unclear>. He didn't understand too much about that. And that upset them. I remember saying that I thought sometime there would be a reaction. That's as near as I got in my valedictory in '73 to saying that there were feelings against the Shah and his policies. I remember that.

So, any contacts with the mullahs were nil, virtually, apart from the.... Well, one had ... reports, you know, came in. One knew a little bit about it. We never made a point of doing that for the reasons I've explained. It would be too costly and risky.

The same about opposition generally. I know some American

young people in the State Department have said that they should have done more of this, that, and the other. But they would have spent ... there was a big price they would have paid if they had tried. Don't you think? I mean, they could have done it, but at what price?

Q. Well, one thing that surprised me, and still surprises me: how was it that the West didn't know about the Shah's illness?

A. Well, I think ... I mean, I knew when I was ... in '73, I was one of the few people who knew that French doctors were coming out, not only to see his mother, but to look at him. Because he had skin cancer at that time. I think. It may have been worse than that. That was in '73. So we did know about it. But then he got better, I think. I don't know too much about that. I do remember it happened in my day, and I was sworn to secrecy about this by Asadollah or somebody. And it was because his mother was also being treated. Was it his mother? Or somebody else? Anyhow, the doctors were coming out then. Already. Isn't that right? About as early as that.

And we don't know what happened later. But of course this is what ... one of the main factors that undid the Shah and debilitated him, that he lost confidence and decision-making. Which was only one ... as a young man ... he didn't have any

young men. It was a fairly artificial thing he'd got for himself, as I've explained. And that could be taken from you. And if you go.... If you're not surrounded by love, which he lacked all his life, and being cared for, you really lose strength very quickly.

And I imagine ... others after me, Parsons, will know much better than I did, but I think that must have been a big factor. It sapped his will.

Q. What was the effect of Mr. Alam's swearing you to secrecy? Does that mean that...?

A. Yes. I think at the time he didn't want it generally known.... I exaggerated perhaps by saying "swearing to secrecy", but he didn't want it generally known that the Shah was being visited by doctors.

Q. According to the American doctors who looked at <him>, it seems that they didn't know he had cancer until he was in exile.

A. I don't think he did have proper cancer til then. I think he had a skin cancer very early on. And they probably cured him.

Q. Did the Foreign Office know that he had skin cancer?

A. I think they did. But skin cancer -- I mean, President Reagan has skin cancer.

Q. Yes.

A. It's not very serious. And, as far as I know -- I left in '74 -- as far as I know, he got over it and there was nothing more heard of it. I don't know. But I do know -- remember -- that at the time. And it may have scared him, unknown to us at the time. As it may scare Reagan unknown to us. We don't know. Although he's much older.

Q. I'd never heard this about the skin cancer. I had assumed that from the beginning it was the same kind of whatever cancer he had.

A. Well, I think it was skin cancer. Again, my memory's so bad. But I do remember French doctors then.

Q. Yes.

A. You knew that, did you?

Q. Well, I recently found out, after one interview. I didn't know....

A. I mean, somebody else told you, did they?

Q. Oh, yes. Yes.

A. Yes. Yes. Oh, good. I mean, I don't think I invented that, but....

Q. No. No. This is general knowledge....

A. The French doctors....

Q. ...now we know that they were....

A. Well I think the French doctors were skin cancer. I think. That could be easily ... somebody ought to check that. I may be wrong. Or they may have been general cancer doctors. I don't know.

Q. <Unclear>.

Q. But I don't think they were too serious about it. I didn't take it seriously because Asadollah didn't take it seriously. That's why I think they were skin cancer. If it had been something else....

Q. It sounds like he had made that up.

A. Maybe. Maybe that's what he told me.

Q. You know, as camouflage for something more serious.

A. Maybe. It could have been. I mean, in which case I was taken in, because I didn't.... I accepted that. Probably -- almost certainly -- reported it.

Q. Yes.

A. But I never thought of it at that time as something that would debilitate the Shah. Otherwise I would have included it in my assessment at the end. With the mullahs and all the rest of it. But I never did. Don't think I did. Well, one makes mistakes.

Q. Well, I'd like to express my gratitude for ... your time.

A. Well, there it is. There it is.